

DREAMS COME TRUE

Children share their experiences



CH-100

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are thankful to the children, parents, teachers, anganwadi workers, community members and stakeholders at the panchayat, block, district and state level for their support and active participation in the process of addressing the issues of social exclusion in our operational districts of Kandhamal, Keonjhar, Khorda, Koraput and Sonepur, Orissa.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to different local, district and state level mainstream media for the wide coverage they provided to highlight the plight of excluded children.

This case study document would not have been possible without the support of DFID under its International Partnership Agreement Programme (IPAP). We sincerely hope that this document will encourage different stakeholders and duty bearers across the state to act towards ensuring the rights of millions of disadvantaged children.

Last but not least, we must place on record the efforts of 'New Concept Information Systems Pvt. Ltd.' for translating the voices of children into the document.

Partners in process



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16 05

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PREFACE

"Social exclusion describes a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live. Discrimination occurs in public institutions, such as the legal system or education and health services, as well as social institutions like the household" (source: Reducing Poverty by Tackling Social Exclusion-A DFID policy paper-2005). Exclusion adversely impacts human rights and children's right in particular. Owing to their vulnerable age; children often suffer the most within the socially excluded groups, because they are discriminated against in many forms. Though India is a signatory to various International conventions, the issue of excluded groups such as the girl child, Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribe, minorities, children with disabilities, children infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS and children of migrating families have not been adequately addressed. The challenge still remains in ensuring convergence between policies and initiatives, as well as the effectiveness of implementation, thereby making sure that all children count and are included in programme planning of government and non-government agencies.

The state of Orissa is no exception to the issue of social exclusion and its manifestation in different forms. The process of social exclusion has adversely affected access to basic human rights in different pockets i.e., tribal districts, slums in urban areas. In the whole process children are either excluded due to their unheard voices or have less access to decision making process and different schemes and programme of the government because they hail from socially excluded communities. To the deep rooted problem of social exclusion; poverty alleviation schemes of the government have not reached all equally. The issue of ensuring equity is still a major challenge before the government and non-government development actors.

Given this, Save the Children-a child rights organisation, which works to deliver immediate and lasting improvement in the lives of children, started a systematic intervention in the year 2009 to address issues of social exclusion with a focus on children's right in seven states of India including Orissa. Save the Children has been working with local NGOs, communities and duty bearers such as relevant government departments & officials with the support of Department for International Development (DFID), UK to address the issues. The overall goal of the project is to **improve the status of the most socially excluded children in India, with their voices being heard and recognized institutionally through formal and informal structures**. The project is purposefully designed to ensure that children in the project locations have increased access to their basic rights in protection, food and education as well as reduction in violence linked to exclusion.

Save the Children and its local NGO partners in Orissa started intervention in five districts such as Kandhamal, Khordha, Keonjhar, Sonapur and Koraput. The socio-economic status, caste, disability, gender, ethnicity, migrant status, no parent status, etc. have made its sizeable number of population particularly children socially excluded and restricted their access to basic rights for overall development.

Partners in the process:

AAINA established in the year 1998, works for children, women and people with disability. It operates in Kandhamal district, which is infamous for the communal violence that took place recently. Children in this district face many facets of exclusion which include religious, caste and gender based discriminations. Due to this, they become the victims and suffer silently.

Centre for Child and Women Development (CCWD), established in the year 1994 works in Khurda district of Orissa. Its core area of work includes working for the rights of children and women. Poverty as a form of class based discrimination that the children, whose families have migrated to Bhubaneswar in search of livelihood options and who live in the slums of the city, face.

People's Cultural Centre (PECUC) was established in the year 1990. It has been working in Keonjhar district of Orissa since 1993. Massive mining and industrialisation is taking place in the district. Poverty in the tribal dominated Keonjhar has forced many children to start working at an early age. Caste and gender based discrimination also affects the rights of children.

Research Academy for Rural Enrichment (RARE), established in the year 1994, works for human rights with special focus on children with disability. It works in Sonepur district, one of the western districts of Orissa. Caste and class feelings are rampant in the district. Discriminatory attitude towards the girl child, children with disabilities and children belonging to poor or scheduled caste community prevails in the district. The district witnesses distress migration every year and the people move to different parts of India in search of a living.

South Orissa Voluntary Association (SOVA) is working in Koraput district since 1993. Koraput is the Southern-most district of Orissa. It is the second poorest in over 500 districts of India and has been declared a scheduled area. Predominantly tribal communities reside in the district with Scheduled Caste and other general caste communities forming minority sections. Child marriage, child labour and discrimination against girl child are very much prevalent in the district. Poverty, ignorance, difficult physical terrain debar many children from accessing education and other basic rights.

Save the Children, its local partners and other INGOs present in Orissa have jointly been working on certain areas of advocacy to influence the decisions of the state government, budget and spending on excluded families and their children in backward districts and urban slums of Orissa. They have largely worked with local, state and national level media to highlight the issues of social exclusion-its impact on children.

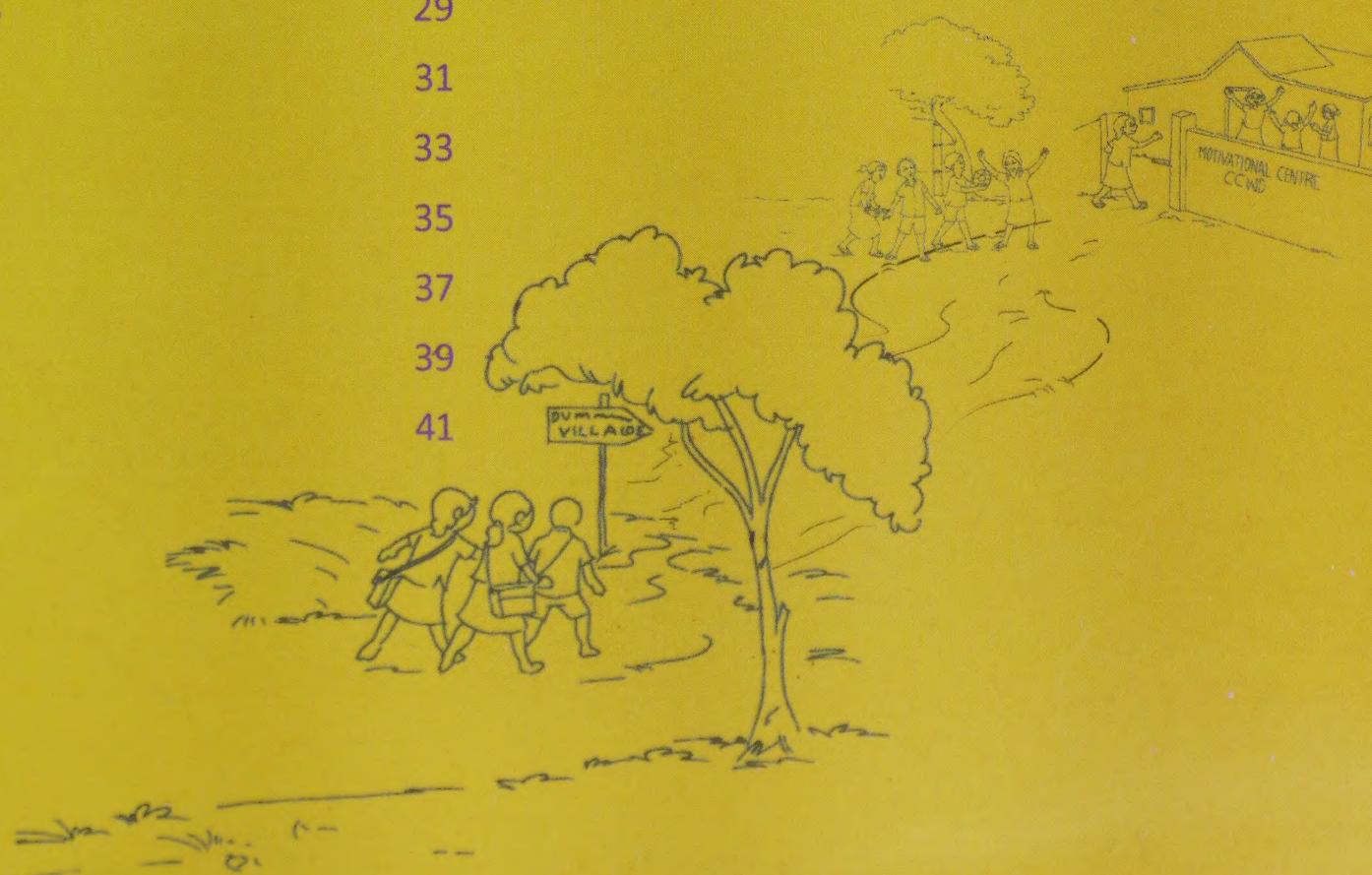
This document is an attempt to capture community level good practices and case studies of the children whose lives have been impacted by the interventions.

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CHILD CLUBS

Introduction

To address social exclusion, minimize its impact on children and to strengthen their access to different schemes and programme, Save the Children began work in five districts of Orissa, in partnership with five local NGOs. The work was done in over 150 villages across the five districts. One of the most successful interventions was the establishment of child clubs in each of the villages.

Key Objectives

- To organize children to discuss issues affecting their life and rights, analyze and take action with the support of adult groups.
- Inclusion of groups that have been excluded on the basis of class, caste, religion, gender and other reasons.
- Bringing universal education to those who have been discriminated against or prevented from going to school for other reasons.

Key Strategies

- Establishing a club where children from all backgrounds can gather together and discuss various issues related to child rights.
- Creating a space where children can play and study together, increasing interaction between children from different backgrounds.

Key Activities

- Discussion of various child-rights related issues, especially regarding discriminations due to caste and gender.
- Identification of excluded children in the village through exclusion mapping.
- Organizing interventions (in partnership with Child Protection Committees) to include such excluded children, by counseling both the children as well as their families.
- Bringing dropouts back to school
- Participating in the efforts to end child labor and child marriages.

Community Participation

Children from across the community took part in the child clubs. Each club typically consists of 20-25 children from different class, castes or tribes with an equal participation of girls and boys. In some cases, children with disabilities have also taken part in the child club and have benefited from its interventions.

Good Practice Indicators

Evidence

There are 150 child clubs in the intervention villages.

On an average, each child club has 20-25 members irrespective of class, caste, creed, ability, religion or sex. They meet regularly, assimilating all the children in the village.

Sustainability

The Child Clubs are self-sufficient. After initially conducting basic training on exclusion mapping and sensitizing the members on issues of child rights violations, the clubs conduct these activities independently.

Replicability

The process is easily replicable and can be seen from the establishment of over 150 child clubs in neighbouring villages. It has been observed that some neighbouring villages, not selected initially for the intervention, have also adopted these practices.

Integration with the System

The child clubs follow a systematic method for exclusion mapping. Once the excluded children have been identified, the child club works in conjunction with the Child Protection Committee, the village Panchayat, school teachers and other community groups to mainstream the child back into education.

Cost Effectiveness

The child clubs are easy to form as no infrastructure or financial requirements are needed. Only sensitization of children on child rights and social exclusion issues, training children on exclusion mapping etc requires financial support from external agency which is very nominal.

Conclusion

Children within the community are increasingly sensitized towards the existing discriminations. They are learning how to counter these issues from a young age and are learning to accept and interact with their peers. Children in these clubs are also initiating programme such as child journalism and taking ownership of the effort to end exclusion within their community. The child clubs are therefore, the locus for both ventilating problems as well as stimulating responses to these issues.

Due to prevailing discriminations and exclusions within the community, some children are hesitant to approach the child club. They are not aware of its activities and do not feel that they are eligible to participate. Changing these attitudes has been one of the main challenges faced in the establishment and functioning of the child clubs.

Children are open and eager to learn, both from adults as well as their peers. When sensitized about various issues at an early age, they have fewer propensities towards carrying their family or community's discriminations and attitudes forward. Hence, behavior change initiated in children is most effective in the long run.

ADULT GROUPS

Introduction

In an effort to establish a rights-responsibility framework in the village and to make the adult community responsible in child rights governance, Save the Children and local partners promoted adult groups in the form of Child Protection Committees (CPCs) in 150 villages in 5 districts of Orissa. As a part of this movement, it brings all categories of members of the community together to discuss and promote equal rights for every child. The CPC in every village comprises of representatives from all sections of the community along with local PRI members, Anganwadi worker, school teacher and ASHA. A significant part of the effort is to sensitize the community about issues of child rights and exclusion based on differences of caste, class, creed and gender.

Key Objectives

- Sensitization of the adult community members about child rights and prevalent discriminatory attitudes.
- Initiate discussion on issues of violation of child rights in their respective villages and take necessary action to promote and protect child rights.

Key Strategies

- Creating a committee where adults from different sections of the community can interact and discuss issues related to protection of child rights.
- Capacitate adult group in the community to address issues related to violation of child rights.
- Sensitizing members of the community and thus reach out to government officials in order to facilitate an environment that is conducive to children's equality, rights and education.

Key Activities

- Organizing sensitization sessions and informative workshops in the village. These could be both general, for the entire community, or specialized, for officials, teachers or other groups.
- Training sessions held on the concept of social exclusion and children, laws and policies related to child rights, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Right to Education Act and the role of civil society in promoting and protecting the rights of children.
- Conducting exclusion mapping in the community in partnership with the child clubs to identify children who are being discriminated against or kept out of school for some reason.
- Conducting interventions in conjunction with child clubs to include excluded children in mainstream education and activities.
- Helping children in Promoting, protecting and supporting child rights through child clubs and their activities.
- Taking actions with appropriate authority towards addressing child rights' violations.

- Holding regular meetings on a monthly basis to review the situation and the state of the children in village.

Community Participation

All sections of community are participants in the Child Protection Committees. These committees usually have about 10-15 members, consisting of school teachers, Anganwadi workers, ward members, decision makers and women and men from both the privileged and excluded communities in the village.

Good Practice Indicators

Evidence

There are 150 no of child protection committees spread over 150 project villages in five intervention districts of Orissa. The committee consists of 10-15 members with representation from village community, school teacher, PRI members etc.

Sustainability

These committees are completely self-sustaining after the initial training sessions conducted by the implementing NGOs. The adults in the villages already appreciate the benefits of these committees and also initiate innovative measures.

Replicability

Setting up CPCs is easily replicable, as can be seen from the existence of CPCs across the state. It comprises of villagers and local officials from the same community. Awareness generation on different government laws, policies and schemes through this committee helps building the capacity of the committee as well as makes it accountable to the rights of children.

Integration with the System

CPCs work in partnership with child clubs in identifying excluded children or other problems affecting children. CPCs have slowly become a part and parcel of the village governance system. This can be looked at as the grass-root level organization in the democratic set up working for child rights at micro level, directly addressing the issue of exclusion and protection issues of children.

They work with law enforcement officers, government officials and redressal mechanisms in case the situation requires deeper intervention.

Cost Effectiveness

CPCs are a group of adults from the same village or hamlet who meet at least once a month to discuss, debate and decide necessary actions to better the life of children and ensure child rights in their respective villages, which usually bears almost no cost. The major input in terms of cost is the initial capacity building trainings and development of IEC materials for use by CPCs, which is supported by an external agency. This is maintained low cost for convenience, sustainability and replicability. No infrastructure or special finance is required for CPC to function at village level.

Conclusion

The entire community participates in the efforts to eliminate discrimination and exclusion, especially concerning children. It has resulted in a better understanding and appreciation of human and child rights across the community. Both privileged and excluded members of the village are able to come together and voice their opinions on an equal platform.

Discriminatory attitudes are deep-rooted within the community and a lot of effort is needed to reform them.

Adults from across the community are willing and interested in promoting equality for children. However, these changes cannot take place overnight and a lot of work is still needed to change the attitudes that continue to persist in the mindsets of the people.



SUGGESTION BOXES

Introduction

Save the Children, in partnership with local implementing NGOs, initiated different activities in 150 villages in 5 districts of Orissa. One of the innovative and democratic initiatives, is the installation of suggestion box in all the villages. The boxes are locked and kept in a place with easy accessibility and then emptied out at regular intervals. Children and adults from the village are invited to put in their suggestions on every aspect of village, from the functioning of the school and the condition of village roads to child labor issues and discriminatory practices and so on. Once a month, the suggestion box committee reviews all the suggestions and then appropriate actions are being taken. The committee itself is also democratic and consists of children, adults, teachers, AWWs, CPC members and panchayat representatives.

Key Objectives

- Provide platform for children to voice their concern and ensure participation of children in child rights governance.
- Introduce a democratic process wherein all members of the community can make suggestions for the improvement of life in the village.
- Create a platform where the opinions of all segments of the village community, especially children can be heard equally and where all can participate in the decision-making process.

Key Strategies

- Installing suggestion boxes in easily accessible locations in the village, such as in schools.
- Establishment of a democratic suggestion box committee with equal representation from all parts of the community including children, women, other excluded groups, decision makers, law enforcers, teachers and so on.

Key Activities

- Collecting suggestions and initiating discussion on the suggestions. These may pertain to ending discrimination and exclusion, improving the school, or any actions to address child rights violations.
- Reviewing all the suggestions on a monthly basis and determining appropriate actions on a priority basis.
- Acting in conjunction with the appropriate partnerships to rectify the problem.

Community Participation

The suggestion box process is one of the simplest and most efficient means to garner the entire community's participation. Since every section of the society is invited to make suggestions and since the suggestions can be anonymous, it is an effective means for important issues to be addressed and for all voices to be heard. Even the most excluded members of society can make suggestions. Furthermore, the suggestion box committee is also a democratic one, with members from different sections of the village.



Good Practice Indicators

Evidence

There are 150 suggestion boxes installed in project villages in five intervention districts of Orissa. Children are enthusiastically putting suggestions and raising child rights issues. The suggestion box committee comprising of both children and adults are discussing and taking appropriate actions to improve the life of children in the village.

Sustainability

The suggestion box intervention is completely sustainable, as it requires no additional infrastructure or finance. However, its proper functioning is contingent on people's awareness and readiness to use it. The suggestion box committee should meet regularly and consist of adequate representation from all sections of the community.

Replicability

This process is easily replicable, as there is no need for any complex infrastructure, training or funding involved in it.

Integration with the System

The suggestion box committee itself includes participants from law enforcers, decision makers, teachers, panchayat representatives and so on. Hence, the process is completely integrated with the system.

Cost Effectiveness

This process is extremely cost effective, because all that is required is a box. The funding for activities based on the suggestions comes from village panchayat, school funds and so on.

Conclusion

The process is an extremely democratic one involving people from different walks of life, with representation from children and adults. Suggestions include the identification of children not going to school, identifying the problem related to schools, mending the village roads and so on. Through these suggestions, various problems of exclusion and discrimination affecting children have been addressed.

The main challenge with the suggestion box process is that the committee may not be entirely democratic, or that it may not meet regularly. Furthermore, the decision making process at the meeting may not actually take all the opinions into consideration.

This process can be advantageous in identifying the problems affecting the children, especially from children's perspective, who may not have access to another platform where they can voice their views and concerns.

EXCLUSION MAPPING

Introduction

To facilitate the process of participatory exclusion mapping and ensuring community action, Save the Children and local partners started exclusion mapping process in 150 villages in 5 districts of Orissa with active participation of children. To begin with training of children and adults organised in the village to conduct exclusion mapping. An exercise that seeks identification of children who are being denied their basic rights, due to different factors.

Key Objectives

Introduce a process wherein the community, especially the children, can identify exclusion and discrimination within their own village.

Use the information to initiate further interventions to mainstream the excluded children and their families.

Key Strategies

Training children and adults in the child clubs and CPCs to conduct exclusion mapping.

Discussing these issues in the child club and CPC meetings and collectively taking up actions.

Key Activities

Children are trained to identify exclusions that are visible within their own community. They then bring their observations to notice in child club or village meetings.

Providing participatory tools such as social mapping to allow the children to conduct thorough exclusion mapping and analysing its impact on children.

Children are acting as child media volunteers and are working to ensure children's rights in their respective villages.

Community Participation

Exclusion mapping involves the entire community, as both adults and children are encouraged to locate incidents of exclusion or discrimination within the village. The community as a whole is made aware of the prevalence of different forms of exclusion and its impact on children. As a result of the training, the ownership of eradicating exclusion affecting children lies with the children.



Good Practice Indicators

Evidence

In 150 project villages, children with support from adult members in the community by using participatory tools have mapped out the exclusion scenario of their village. Based on the findings of the exclusion map of the village, child clubs and CPCs are taking action to reduce exclusion and bringing all children back to the mainstream development process.

Sustainability

Exclusion mapping is very sustainable, as it is not a complex process and the children trained to conduct it can pass on their skills to others. Identifying cases of exclusion will sensitize the community on social injustice that is prevalent and encourage them to take appropriate action.

Replicability

Exclusion mapping is easily replicable as minimum tools are needed and anyone can practice it.

Integration with the System

Exclusion mapping would be an empty exercise without its integration with the system. Exclusion mapping allows for cases of exclusion to be identified, which then allows the child clubs, CPDs, panchayat members and others to take the right steps for ensuring rights and equality.

Cost Effectiveness

The process of exclusion mapping is a very cost effective one, as the training and tools required are minimum. The system works largely due to the live experience of the children in the village and their daily observations.

Conclusion

This process allows for a realistic assessment of the discriminations and exclusions in different forms. Furthermore, the child-led-approach leads to the elimination of exclusion beginning at a young age.

The main challenge with exclusion mapping is the follow-up after the initial mapping exercise. The mapping of exclusion is only the first step and has to be followed by measures designed to eliminate exclusions at different levels.

Children are eager and interested in participating in this process. Number of children out of school were identified in this way and are now going to school. However, mapping exclusion is only the first step in eliminating it. It is important to involve the entire community in fighting against exclusion and minimising its impact on children.

NIGHTMARE TO PLEASANT DREAMS

I was only thirteen when I went through the worst experience of my life. Due to communal violence, hundreds of houses, places of worship and schools were burnt. Thousands like me found themselves without a place to live.

I was studying in a residential Mission School in Raikia block of Kandhamal district. When the violence took place, our school was destroyed. All of us students were thrown out onto the road. Somehow, I was able to reach my parents, who had earlier shifted to Bhubaneswar to earn their living.

My parents stayed in a rented house in Ishaneswar slum in Niladri Vihar along with my younger brother and sister. My father has a small tea shop while my mother is a daily wage labourer. Both of them have to work throughout the day to earn money to feed us.

Though I wanted to study, my mother wanted me to stay at home and take care of my two year old sister. This was because, my mother had to remain at the worksite due to her work.

The area where I live has a child club and also a Child Protection Committee. The volunteers identified and find children like me who for some reason are not able to go to school. During a visit to our small house, the members of the child club found that I was a school drop out.



The Child Club and the members of Child Protection Committee (CPC) then came to our house together. They talked to my parents and convinced them to continue my education. They explained how it would help me in the future.

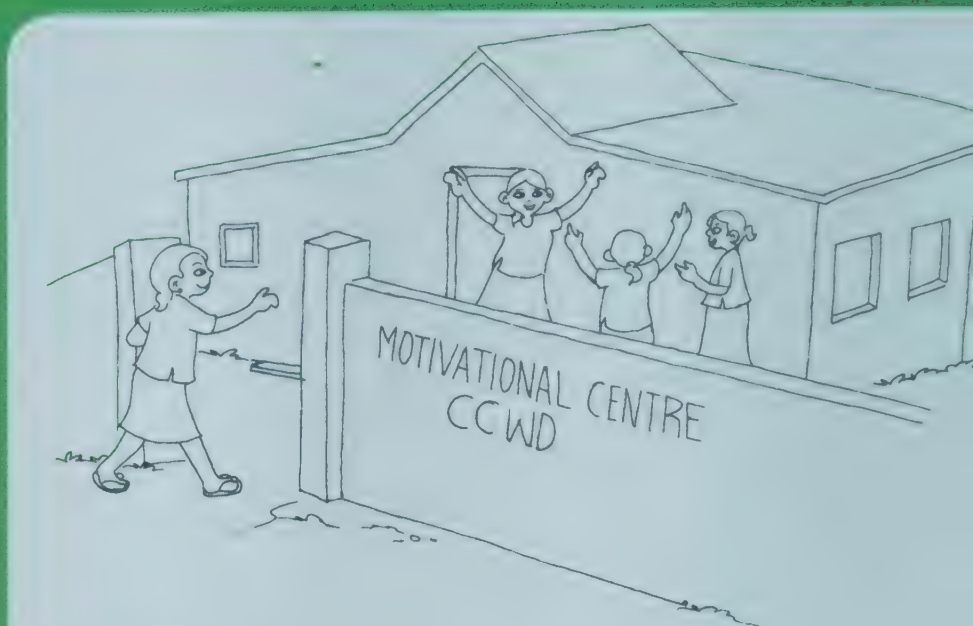
My parents finally relented and decided to send me to school again. I was overjoyed, but a bit scared to go to school in a new place.

The CPC members understood my difficulty. They got me admitted in the Motivation Centre run by Centre for Women and Child Development-an NGO. There were other children and we were taught to study through different methods like songs and dances. After a few months when they

realised that I was ready to go to a regular school, they admitted me in the government primary school in Niladri Vihar.

Today, I am studying in standard-III. I am going to school regularly. Although I am older than all the others, I don't mind sitting with the younger children in the class. I am happy to go back to school again.

Now I am free to continue with my studies, I want to go on and someday like to become a teacher.



Message

Children should be allowed to dream. Parents should help them chase their dreams.

Name : Reshma Pradhan
Age : 14
Community : Christian
No. of Siblings : 2
Village : Chandrashekarapur
Block : Bhubaneswar
District : Khordha

Changes Noticed : Child is going to school regularly. Although she is over aged for her class she has no problem sitting with the younger children.

Intervention

Implemented by : CCWD, in partnership with Save the Children

A BETTER TOMORROW

A few months ago, I never imagined I would ever study again. I used to remember my school days and feel sad that I could not study or play with my friends ever again. I used to go to the local village school, but had to stop after 5th standard because there were no further classes in that school.

I helped my parents everyday to do the household work, in the fields and also to collect firewood. There was no time to play or read. I would wake up everyday at 5 o'clock, clean the dishes, help my mother cook, clean the house, serve the food to my family, help my father in the fields and so many other things!

Being the second child in the family, I also had to help my mother take care of my younger brothers and sisters. I get tired of working all the time!

I was very shy and scared to talk to other people, even children. They are mostly from other castes whereas I am a Scheduled Caste. Because of this they make fun of me and make me stay separate all the time. Like when I went to collect water at the well, I had to wait until everyone got their water first. At the temple, or at festivals and feasts, I had to stay far away from other people.

Of course, it was not only me who was treated like this, but all the members of our community. Even at school, when we used to eat our mid-day meal, I had to sit apart from my classmates. This used to make me feel sad and sometimes I cried when this happened.



But some time ago, people from an NGO called SOVA came to our village and they had workshops and meetings with everyone in our village, both young and old. They organized rallies, in which everyone participated and motivated both adults and children alike.

They were really nice and friendly and they talked about all sorts of things that made us think differently. Like, they talked about how everyone is equal, boys, girls and people from all castes and how everyone should be given equal chances in life, to go to school.

They talked about child rights, different social security schemes for poor and excluded people. They made my parents and many others see that children should be going to school and not being discriminated in any way.

I was afraid of joining a school in a different village. The people from SOVA asked me to join the child club in our village and participate in different activities of the child club with other children. Slowly I felt better, more at ease with children from other castes. I gained confidence.

My parents agreed to let me go to Dumripadar UP school, where they offer secondary schooling. It is about 3 kilometers from my village and I happily walked there.

Now we all want to work together to make our village equal for everyone, regardless of their caste, class and status. Many of my friends too are back in school. I plan to become a teacher when I grow up so that I can help other children!



Message

Children do not know what exclusion is; they learn it from their elders.

Name : Sanjali Khosla
Age : 13 years
SC/ST : Yes
No. of Siblings : 3
Village : Keregaon
Panchayat : Dumripadar
District : Koraput

Changes Noticed : Today Sanjali is a role model for others in her village. She plays an active role at the village child club, participates enthusiastically in training and meetings and raises caste and gender discrimination issues within the community.

Intervention Implemented by : SOVA, in partnership with Save the Children

A SECOND CHANCE

00 I feel like a child once again! Now I am going to school every day and am living at home with my family. This makes me so happy. My three brothers and sisters are also going to school with me. We all feel better to be doing this. Before, we used to clean houses or pick rags.

The thing is that we are extremely poor. Our house is made of mud and tin. My parents work very hard, making bricks 90 rupees for a day's work. This is insufficient for food and clothes and other basic necessities.

Whatever money our parents earned was not enough to feed or clothe all of us. Because of this, we had to work to supplement the family income. If we were to go to school, we would not have enough money even for food.

But all that was before we came to know about free schooling for children. An organization called CCWD, came to our village and told us about free and compulsory education. CCWD organized the children and their parents into forming child club and child protection committee(CPC).

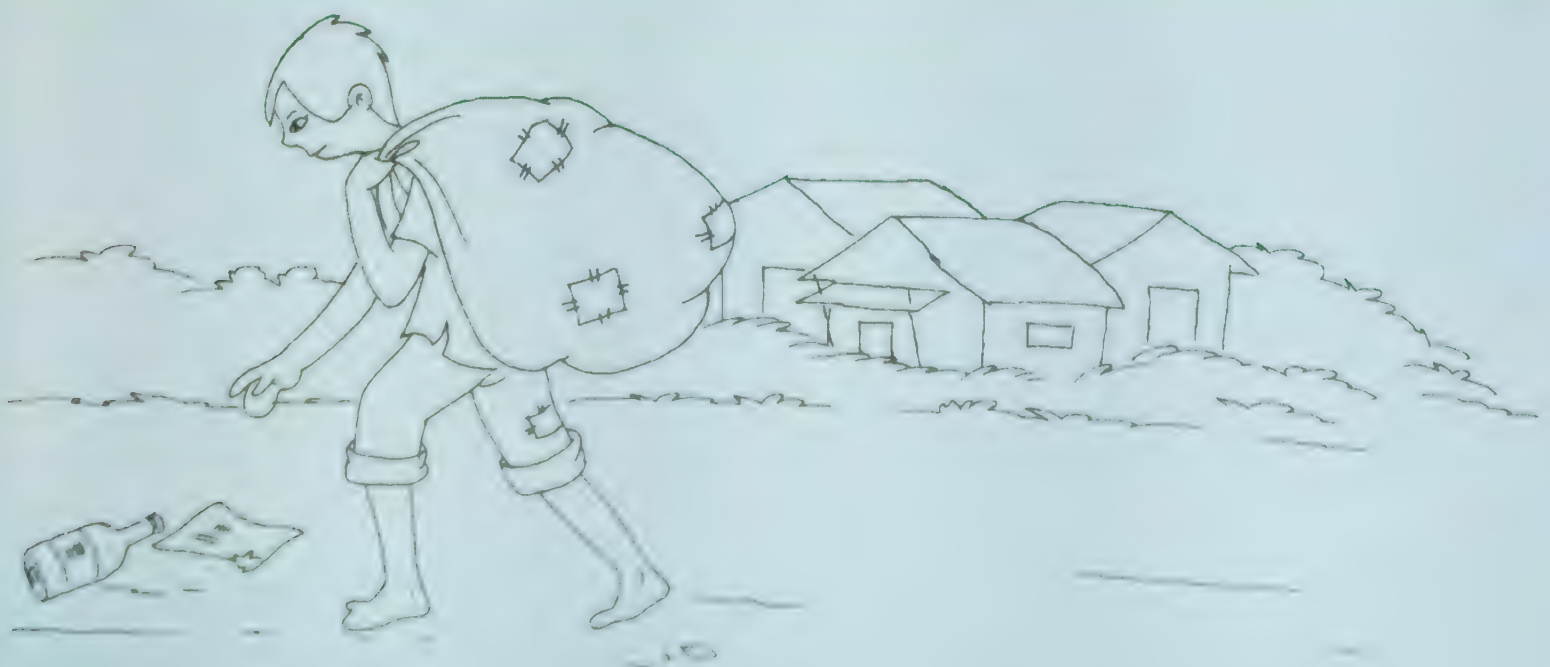
They organized training sessions, did an exclusion mapping of the village, carried out door-to-door visits for enrollment and wanted to help us live better lives.

In particular, they wanted to help children like me, who are poor, or dropped out of school for other reasons. They believe that every child should have the chance to study.

I used to work in a house nearby. I would sweep the floor and wash the dishes and clothes. But the people I worked for were not nice. They used to shout at me and beat me for small things. I was afraid of them. I used to miss my family very much and cry all the time.

One day they beat me so badly that I could not take it anymore and ran away from there and came back home. That was when the child club members came to know about me. The CPC and the child club, along with the support of CCWD, told my parents about the Right to Education Act 2009.

They talked about free and compulsory education and the free Mid Day Meal scheme. Not only that, they told my parents about different government programme and schemes for the excluded



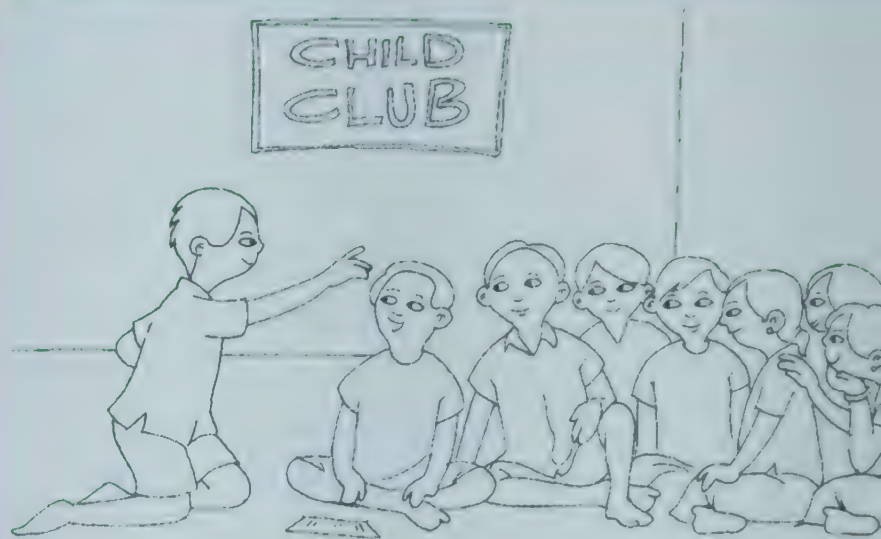
section and how to access them. They held awareness programme on school enrollment and also conducted campaigns against child labour.

My whole family was hopeful about the future after meeting them and now I am admitted in school.

I attend the child club regularly. In the club, children from minority and dalit section are also involved and we have discussions on the rights of children. The topics we discuss are endless: role of Child Welfare Committee (CWC), Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act, role of Department for Women and Child Development, Juvenile Justice Board, Right to free and compulsory Education Act, student helpline, enrollment campaign and other current issues related to children.

We also sing, dance and play together. I feel like I have been given a second chance to be a real child. I don't have to work in anyone's house. Nobody shouts at me or beats me anymore.

I can go to school and read and write. I can study different subjects and become anything when I grow up. I want to become a government officer so that I can help children like myself. I can help make our society friendly and helpful for all children!



Message

Stop child labour! Let's make our society child friendly.

Name	: Prava Soren
Age	: 10 years
SC/ST	: Yes
No. of Siblings	: 6
Village	: Chandrashekarpur
Block	: Bhubaneswar
District	: Khordha
Changes Noticed	: The child and all her six siblings are now attending school rather than working as domestic labourers or rag pickers. The family has been informed about various government schemes that could improve their situation. The community as a whole has been sensitized on issues of exclusion based on class and caste.
Intervention	
Implemented by	: CCWD, in partnership with Save the Children

BACK TO SCHOOL

In the last few months, my life has changed so much! I feel like my life has started again. I have been allowed to go back to school again and I am too happy for words!

Before this, I used to go to school until class 5. But sometimes I did not do so well in school. This was because, no one in my house could help me with my studies, as none of them ever went to school.

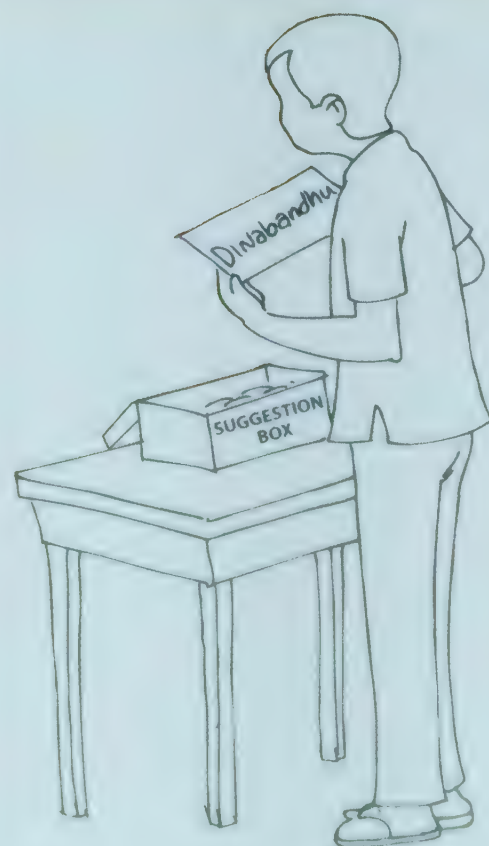
When I did not score well, my parents were unhappy. They were not keen for me to continue with my studies, instead they felt that I should work to earn. This is because we are very poor and need all the money we can get.

When I stopped going to school and worked in a dhaba (road side hotel). This was a very bad time in my life. I was very sad to be working and not going to school. My old friends would see me, but they would not play with me. I felt ashamed that I was working and so stayed away from them.

It made me very sad to see my friends go to school while I was working all the time. I used to think that there was no other way for me because I am poor girl and hail from a tribal family.

About ten months ago, my whole life started changing. One day, some people from the child club in our village, came and talked to me. Some of my old friends were also there. They asked me many things about my life, my work and my family. Initially, I could not understand why they wanted to know so much about me, but they were kind and friendly. So I talked to them and told them how much I miss going to school.

I asked them how they came to know about me and why they decided to contact me. They told me that someone had put my name in the suggestion box at the child club. The note said that I was a good student and I should be enrolled in school once again.



In one of the meetings, the teachers, child club members and the people at the child protection committee decided to contact me and see if I wanted to go to school. That's how it all started.

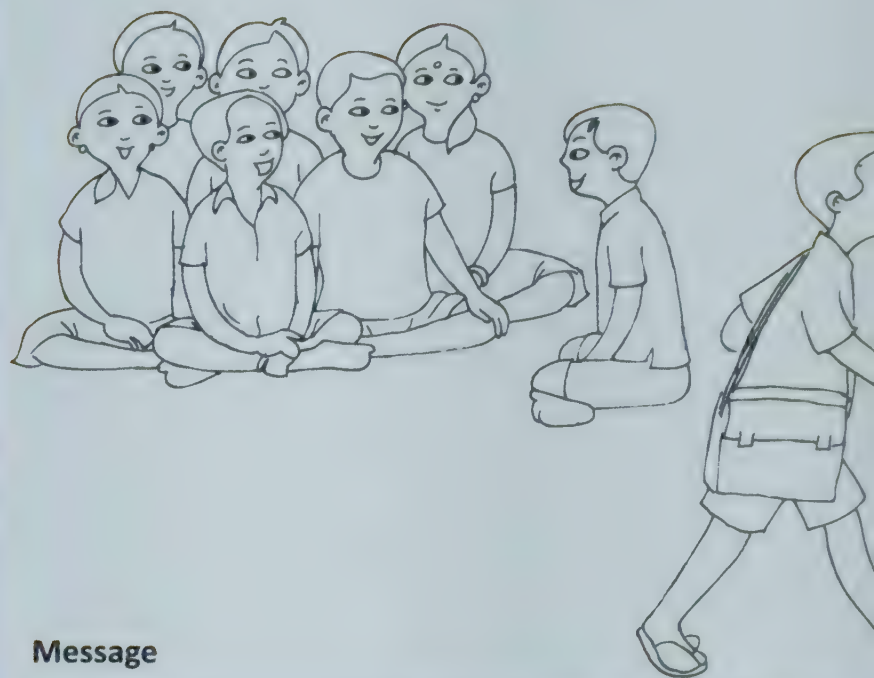
I am so thankful to the person who put my name in the suggestion box. I never knew about the things and would not be back in school, if it had not been by this wonderful person. I hope that someday I too can help build a better future for other children.

After our initial talks, I was asked by the child club members to come along to the club and share my thoughts. I was surprised because, I thought that these clubs were only for school-going children. But everyone was kind to me and said that they wanted to hear from me.

This was the first time in my life, I was treated as an equal. I went home bursting with joy!

At first, my parents were not too happy, but after the people from the child protection committee and the children from the child club came and talked to them, they became interested with the idea of education. When they told me that I could go to school again, I was surprised and happier than ever!

Now I am going to school regularly. Some other children in my village, who used to work like me are also going to school. I want to study so that someday I can work in the education department of the government and bring the joy I feel to more children's lives!



Message

I want my village to be child labour free and child friendly

Name : Dinabandhu Naik

Age : 14 years

SC/ST : Yes

No. of Siblings : 4

Village : Dalanga

Block : Patana

District : Keonjhar

Changes Noticed : Both parents and child are motivated. He is now attending school regularly. The community has been sensitized on issues of social exclusion and responding well.

Intervention

Implemented by : PECUC, in partnership with Save the Children

DIFFERENT STROKES FOR DIFFERENT FOLKS

“About six months ago, when I had just finished class III, we had to go away from the village with our parents. My parents had to go to Bhubaneswar to work on a construction site. They earned about 110 rupees a day at Bhubaneswar but not on a regular basis.

I was very sad to leave my village because I had to discontinue my schooling and leave behind all my friends. In Bhubaneswar, there was a school, but it was not at all nice. The teacher and the other children were not nice to me. They made fun of me, because I am poor. They also made fun of me because my parents are labourers. It was a very difficult time for me.

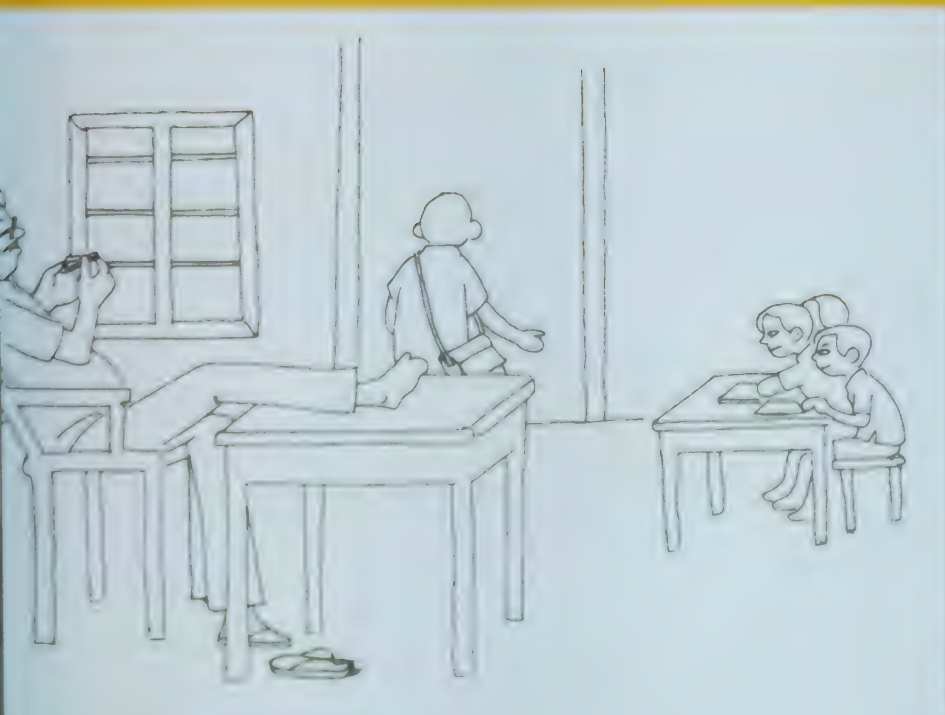
Finally, I stopped going to school. It was not only because they made fun of me, I also found it very difficult to learn. The teacher did not teach us the same way as my village teacher used to. Besides he didn't seem to care at all. He would come to class, put his feet on the desk and start cleaning his nails.

How could I learn in a place like that? It was difficult for me to understand anything. There were not enough books for everybody, so I could not even study by myself. When I felt that it was no use going to school, I just wandered around the slum by myself and did nothing all day.

Then once, while visiting our village, children from the child club came to my home. They asked about my family, especially about me and my brothers and sisters. They wanted to know if we were going to school.

When they found that we were not studying, they talked to us more. They explained how study can help us. We were very excited when we heard all this!

After that, for the next few months, they came once in a while, talked to my parents and told them about government programs that help children and poor people. My parents started insisting that I should go to school again.



I first went to the motivation center in the village, run by the organization called Centre for Child and Women Development (CCWD). Members of the Child Protection Committee and the Child Club had told me about it earlier. After attending the Childrens Club for a few months, I realized that I should start attending school once more.

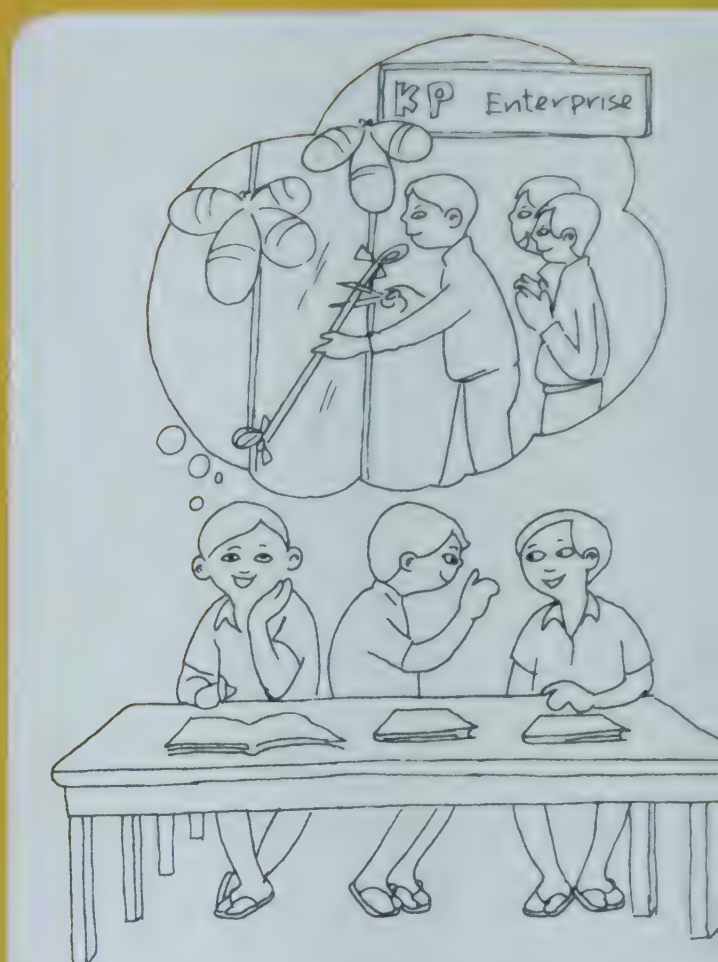
Besides, helping me realize the importance of schooling, the Child Protection Committee members held discussions with local school teachers about school environment and how to make classes more interesting for children.

I took admission in school again. I go there every day and I love to study. I am working hard so that I can make something of my life. I am also participating in the child club now and hope that I too can make a difference in other children's lives.

Things have become better for my whole family as well. The people from CCWD told us about a scheme where the government lends money for poor people to build a house. Now we no longer live in our hut made of mud and plastic! We can have real rooms and even a proper roof!

My whole family is much happier. My parents are happy to see us studying, while we are happy to go to school again. I want to study well so that I can become a good businessman. I will have a small company and I will earn more money. Then my family will never have to be poor again. That is my dream.

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Message

Let us join hands to give all children equal rights

Name	: Balram Biswal
Age	: 10 years
SC/ST	: Yes
No. of Siblings	: 4
Village	: Chandrashekarpur
Block	: Bhubaneswar
District	: Khordha
Changes Noticed	: The child and his four siblings are now going to school regularly. He participates actively in the child clubs, especially raising issues such as social exclusion within the community.
Intervention Implemented by	: CCWD, in partnership with Save the Children

HAPPY TO BE IN SCHOOL

I love to study and learn how to read. It is very nice to go to school and meet other children. We study and play together and have a lot of fun. My cousin brother, who I live with, also loves school very much. We go there together everyday. But this was not always so.

All these happened only recently. Before that, we were not going to school, but instead working in a hotel. Both my parents passed away when I was very young and I was living with my grandmother since then.

My grandmother works in a hotel, so she got me a job there too, so that I could help contribute to the household expenses. When I was working in the hotel, I see other children going to school. This makes me feel sad.

Then one day some people from AAINA-an NGO came into the hotel and started talking to me. They wanted to know why I was working. They asked me why I was not in school. Then they asked me if I wanted to go to school. I told them, yes!

They said that if I wanted to study, I could. Then they talked to my grandmother and explained about how it is good to send children to school. But my grandmother was worried because she had very little money. But they said that there were schools where children could study free of cost.

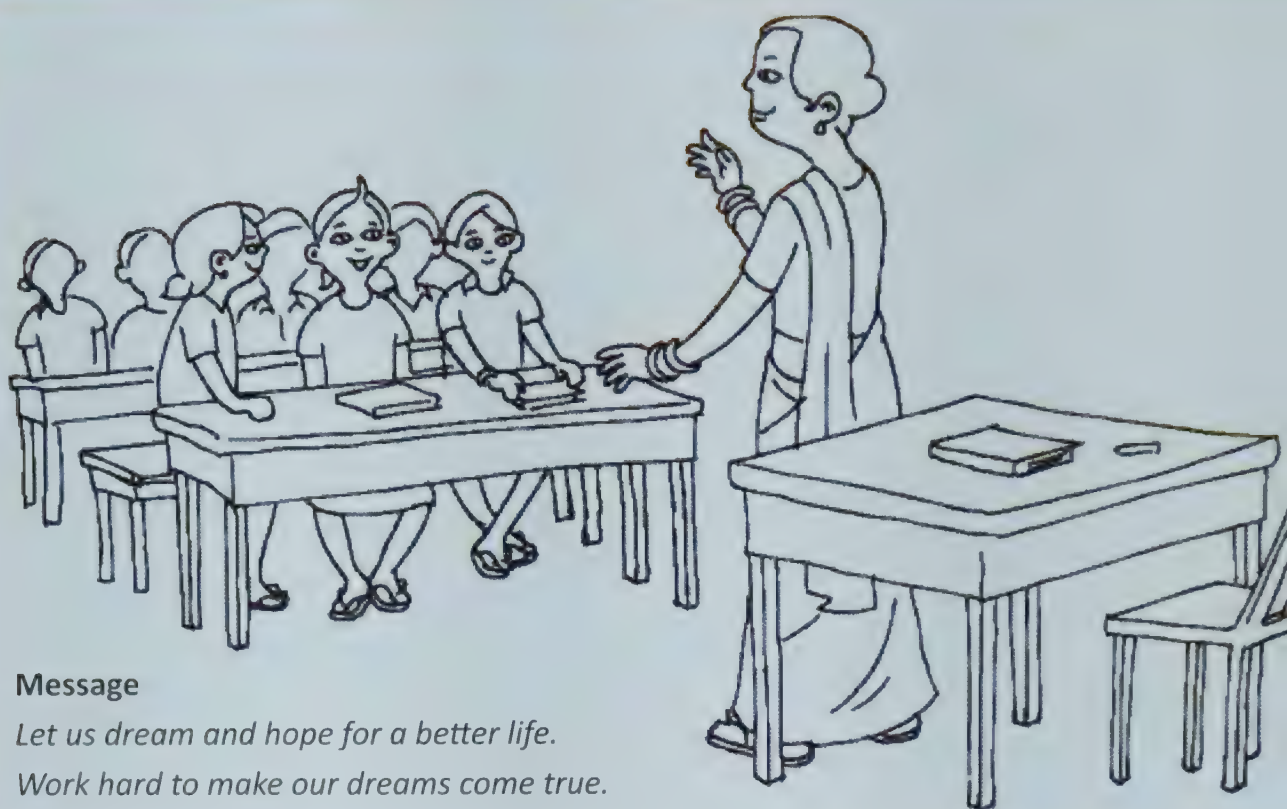
Neither me nor my grandmother had even imagined that school could be free. We had no idea about this nor had we asked anyone about this. We were so happy! And not only that, they told us that the school gives us free lunch! My brother and I could hardly believe what we heard.



Now, for the last few months, we have been going to school and studying there. The teachers are nice and tell us about many things. I never knew how many things are there to learn!

I have many friends now and we love to play together. We like to study, but playing is much nicer. I never used to have time to play before, because I was always working in the hotel. So I am happier now than ever before!

Our teachers told us that we can become anything in life if we work hard to reach our goals. My goal is to study so that one day I can become a doctor. Then I can help sick people become healthy again. I can also be a role model to other children.



Message

Let us dream and hope for a better life.

Work hard to make our dreams come true.

Name	: Sunita Nayak
Age	: 8 years
SC/ST	: Yes
No. of Siblings	: 2
Village	: Gaudasahi, NAC
Block	: G. Udayagiri
District	: Kandhamal
Changes Noticed	: The grandmother and the child have understood the importance of education and have been informed about different government schemes for free education and mid-day meals. The child is now attending school regularly.
Intervention Implemented by	: AAINA, in partnership with Save the Children

A SMALL DEED CAN GO A LONG WAY

I am physically challenged. I got infected with Polio in both my legs when I was only 3 years old. I had a high fever for a whole month and after that I could not walk. As doctor says I have about 100 per cent disability in my legs.

My parents were very sad. But then I got a little stronger and even started going to school when I was five years old. That was the primary school. I got a tricycle when I was in class V. Some people in the government hospital in Sonapur were kind enough to give it to me.

It was a government scheme, where they give free tricycles to people who cannot walk. I found out later that the tricycle was supplied by the District Social Welfare Office in Sonapur.

It was a great help to me as I was able to go to school every day. I really love to study, so I was very happy. When I am in school, it only matters that I can learn. My weak legs cannot stop me from that. The tricycle was nice because using it, I can go to school on my own. Before that, my parents had to take me, which was not possible all the time.

I even started to go to Khaliapali high school for class VI. It is almost 3 kilometers away, but I still used to go there on my own. And then one day, my cycle tripped on the road and I fell down. This made me very sad. I hurt myself when that happened. Not only that, my cycle was broken and I could not go to school anymore.

It made me very sad and compelled me to sit at home. No school, no classes, no friends and nothing left to cheer about. I was left all alone to myself. This small incident excluded me from participating in my regular activities. I felt hopeless during those days.

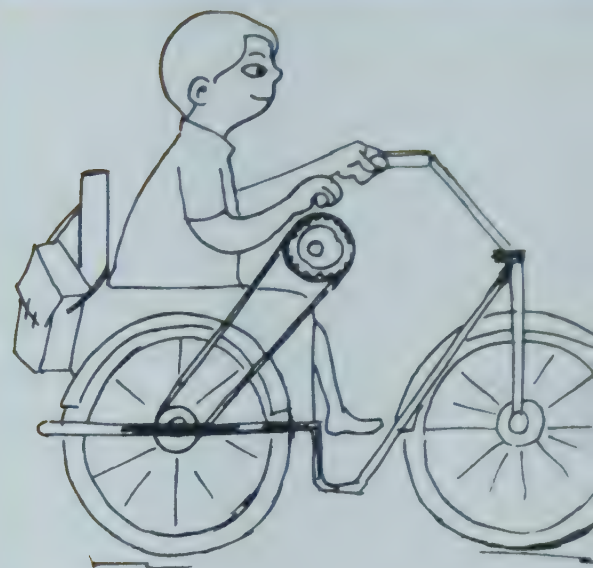


My father does not have much money. He works very hard but still we are very poor. So he could not repair my tricycle. This became the subject of discussion in the child club meetings. All children saw that I wanted to go to school but that I could not go because of my broken tricycle.

Then I came to know that an organization called RARE had opened a Disability Resource Centre in Rengali to help people like me. The center provided health care services for people with disabilities and also tells about various government schemes that can help. It is almost 2 km from my village. It was discussed in our village child club and I went there during a function where, Mr. Naik, the Sarpanch was the chief guest.

Members of RARE and the child club members told the Sarpanch about my situation. He was very kind and said that he would pay for the repair of my cycle, if I promised to go to school regularly. I wanted to jump for joy!

I agreed immediately and since my tricycle was repaired, I have not missed even one day of school! And now I have changed my school. I now go to Rengali High School. This one is closer, so it is easier for me to go there everyday. Truly, I have never been happier!



Message

A little bit of empathy can change the life of someone less fortunate

Name	: Bhandua Bagh
Age	: 13 years
Disability	: Unable to walk due to childhood Polio
SC/ST	: No
No. of Siblings	: 3
Village	: Banktentuli
Panchayat	: Rengali
Block	: Sonapur
District	: Subarnapur
Changes Noticed	: The parents and child have been informed about government programme and entitlements for persons with disabilities. The child's tricycle was repaired and he is now attending school regularly.
Intervention Implemented by	: RARE, in partnership with Save the Children

TO DREAM AGAIN

Do you know how frustrating it is to study till 8th Standard and then have to quit? Well I do. I used to go to the Nodal U.P. School in the village, but once I finished class 8, I had to stop because my school did not have classes 9th and 10th.

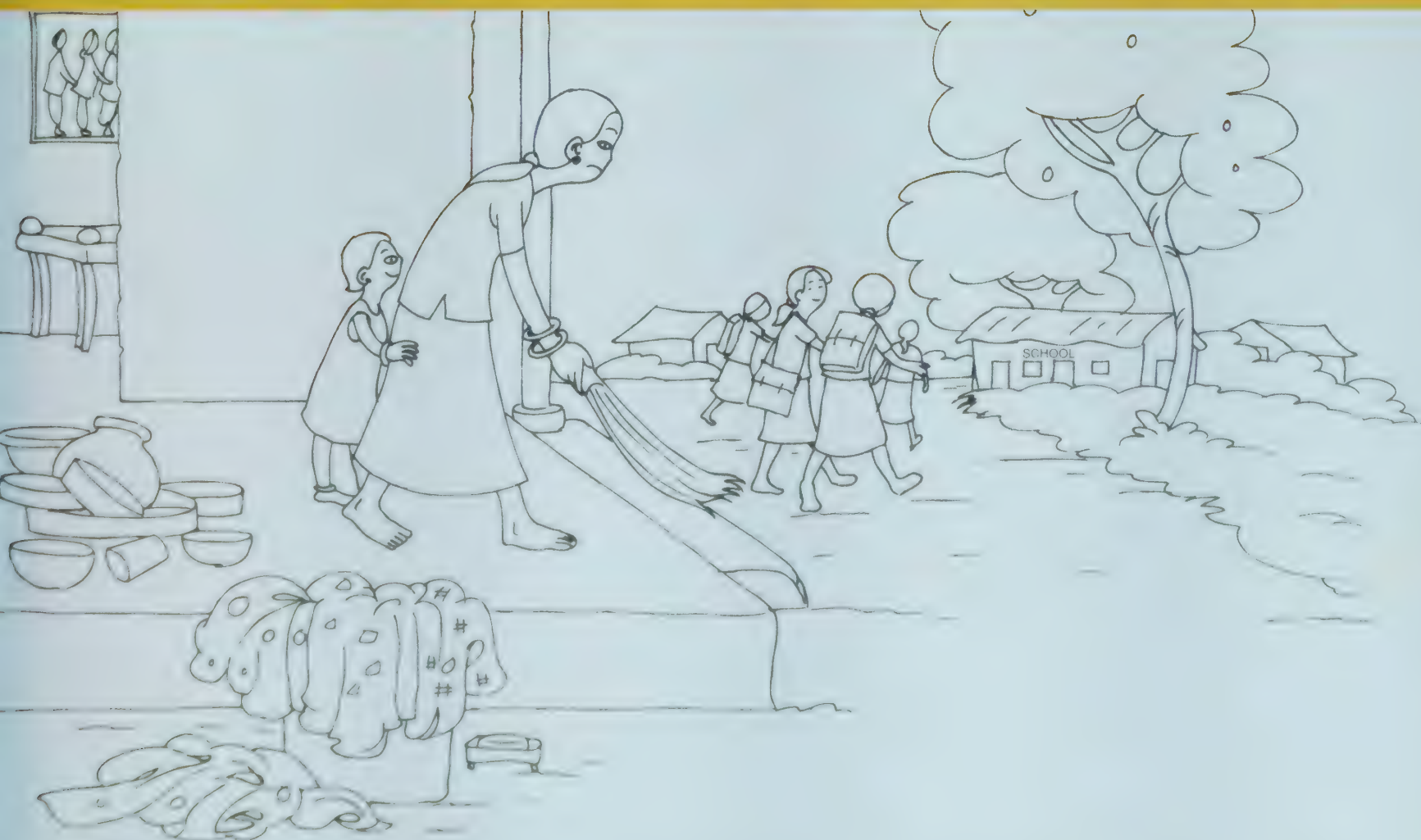
I wanted to continue to go to school, but my parents did not allow me to go because the secondary school was far away and being a girl they did not want me to live in a hostel. Also, my rank was always average, so my parents said that unless I topped the class, I might as well stay at home and work.

So I stayed at home and helped my mother with the household work and took care of my three younger sisters. There was even talk going around about my marriage very soon.

Don't get me wrong, I love my family and I love to help them, but I missed my studies and all my friends. I was also scared that my parents would get me married. I did not want to get married, at such an early age.

Some of my friends were already married and I am worried that I too will be forced to get married like them. I did not want to become dependent on my husband – I wanted to study and become strong and independent!


Then some people of SOVA - an NGO came to our village. They went from house to house telling people about the necessity of education, about child rights, the importance of stopping early marriage of girls and other such issues. They explained these new ideas to everyone in the village,



including panchayat members, school teachers and other influential people within the community. They even organized media campaigns about these issues.

This forced the elders in the village to think about issues that had never been talked about. Parents were convinced to let me continue with my education. I was both dumbfounded at the turnaround as well as overjoyed by the realisation that now I would no longer have to work all day long.

The school too has become a better place. It now also has a class 9th as well as a new teacher who, unlike the old one, opens the school every single day. Now I know that, I am going to school again. Many of my friends are also coming back to school and we are sure to have loads of fun studying and playing together.

Who knows maybe I can become a teacher or even a doctor some day! 



Message

Avoid child marriage. Let girls study and enjoy their childhood.

Name	: Puspa
Age	: 14 years
SC/ST	: No
No. of Siblings	: 3
Village	: Dumripadar
Panchayat	: Dumripadar
District	: Koraput
Population	: 325 (Males-130, Females-133)
Children (0-18yrs)	: 92 (Boys-45, Girls-47)
Changes Noticed	: Parents and child motivated and she is now attending the village school, which has expanded to include higher classes.
Intervention Implemented by	: SOVA, in partnership with Save the Children

A CHANCE AT A NORMAL LIFE

I I stand before you today feeling extremely fortunate. It may seem strange to hear me saying I am lucky, as I was born with cerebral palsy, but I really do feel that way. You see, now I am attending school regularly and am interacting and playing with other children of my age.

I haven't had many opportunities in my life to feel like a normal child, so I am truly happy now that I am going to school.

I used to go to school earlier, but it was very difficult for me to go regularly. I could not go by myself, so my parents had to take me every time because my legs don't support me while walking. Because they both work in regular jobs, they were not always able to take me to school.

I couldn't go to school regularly and whenever I used to go, I had to keep to one corner of the school. No friends, no playing. As despite my wheelchair it was difficult for me to move around at school. My limbs are too weak to move the wheelchair around for long. Finally, I stopped going altogether.

I felt sad, because I really wanted to go to school and make new friends, but it was not really possible. They often made fun of me due to my disability and I always felt like an outsider.

When it became too difficult for my parents to take me, I simply accepted my fate and thought I would never be able to study.

After I stopped going to school, there was nothing for me to do all day. I would just sit in the house while my two siblings and my parents would go out for work, study and play. I would feel very lonesome and neglected and would wish I too could lead a normal life like the others.

Then, some time ago, things slowly began to change. An organization called AAINA came to our village and they started something called a child club. All my old friends from school became members of the child club and in one of the meetings, they talked about me.



It seems that in the child club meetings, they were talking about how every child is equal and that every child has a right to education. When one of my friends told them, about how I wanted to study but was not able to, the people from AAINA and the Child Protection Committee decided to help me.

They came and talked to my parents and me and told us about various schemes the government has for children with disabilities. They told us about something called the Banishree Scholarship, an escort allowance and other such things.

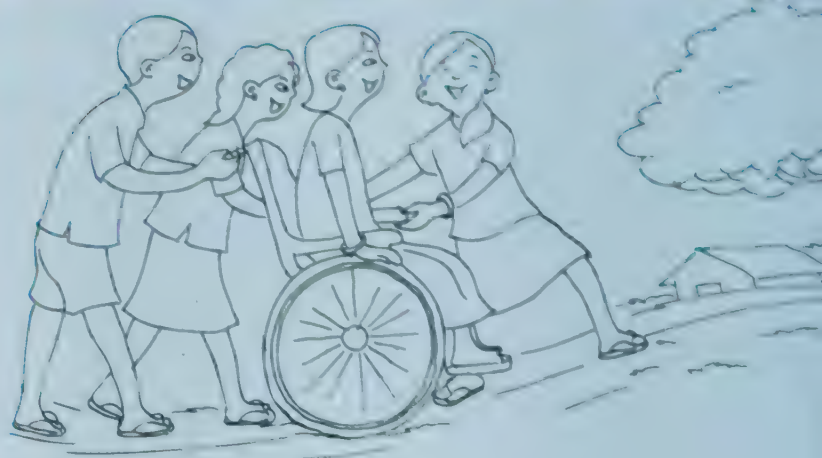
None of us had ever heard of these things before and we were most delighted! They even talked to the teachers in the school about giving extra support to children like me.

So now, my whole life has changed! I attend school regularly now. My mother takes me to school daily and whenever she is not there, she makes sure that one of our neighbours helps me reach school. It seems all the villagers are happy about my going to school.

I have many friends there. They no longer make fun of me because of my wheelchair and my disability. In fact, the entire village seems to be more aware of the rights of children, including girls and children with disabilities.

I have applied for a scholarship and an escort allowance. My teacher says that will be given to me soon.

I want to study hard and be an example to other disabled children like me. I want to show them that they too have rights and that they too can have bright futures.



Message

Join hands and work together to bring equality and light to the life of every child

Name : Sarala Mallick
Age : 11 years
SC/ST : Yes
No. of Siblings : 2
Village : Raipalli
Block : G. Udayagiri
District : Kandhamal

Changes Noticed : The child is now enrolled in 4th standard and is attending school regularly. Her parents have been informed about government schemes for disabled persons and she is availing these benefits. The teachers, students and extended community have been sensitized about the rights of disabled person and the child no longer faces exclusion and discrimination within her village.

Intervention Implemented by : AAINA, in partnership with Save the Children

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

Work, work and more work! That's all I did till a few months ago. I was a child labourer, a bagalla and I had to work everyday, taking care of the goats. But, in last few months, my life has changed beyond my wildest dreams. I have gone from being a bagalla to a child again!

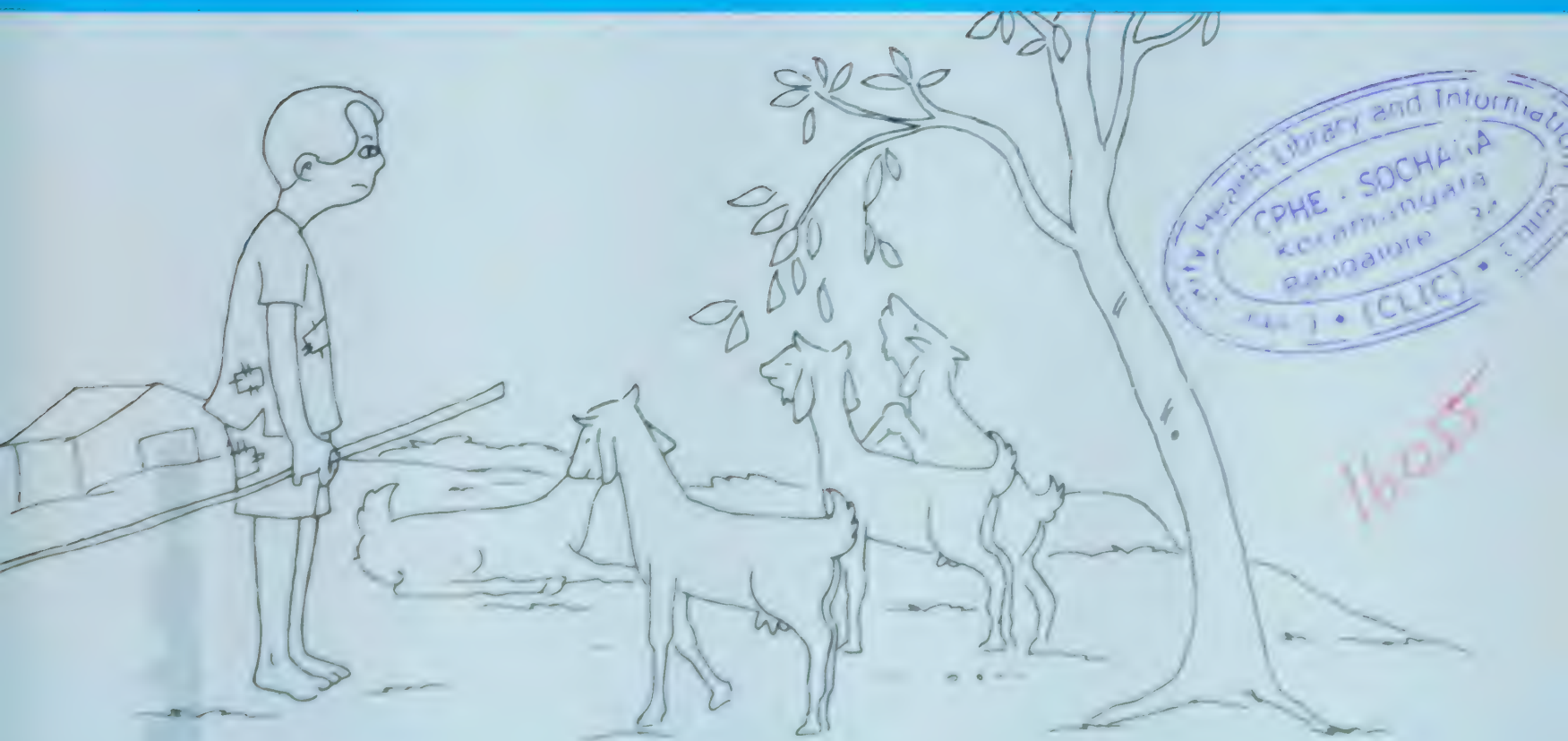
As a labourer, I used to go to the field with the goats every day. I had to move with them all day, often without any food. I had no shoes and I would walk everywhere barefoot. If anything ever happened to a goat, my employer beats me. In the summer, when there was no work, my employer never supported me.

I was not allowed to go to school and I had to work everyday while my eldest brother and my friends would go to school. Sometimes my friends laughed at me and called me names.

I used to watch my brother going school and feel sad that I could not go. But I knew that I had to work. My family is poor and we all had to work and help our parents. That is the life of the people from our community. We are Mundas and this is how we have to live. My parents barely earn 500 to 1000 rupees a month, so every small amount helps.

That is how it used to be. Now, things are changing slowly, because some organizations are coming to our village and helping us in many ways. The government is also helping us, like when they helped us build a proper house with bricks. Before that, we used to live in a hut but we have a real house now.

Last year, an NGO called PECUC came to our village and saw many of us children who were not attending school. They held regular meetings with parents and families of school drop-outs and explained why education is important. They also persuaded many of the families to give their children a chance to go to school.



They trained many of our friends and neighbours to talk about these issues, so that we could discuss it amongst ourselves. They also informed us about different government schemes on education.

Now my parents also have better jobs and earn more money. The government has some program called the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and through this my parents got a job card. With this card, they can get work and make more money. Now we do not have a hard life and things are looking brighter for my whole family.

Many children around my age were part of the sisu sabha (the child club) and help identify children like me, who are not going to school. They help these children and their families understand, why schooling is important.

One day, I was watching the goats and they came to me and started talking about school I told them, I really wished I could go to school. Then the next day, they came and talked to my family about sending my brothers and me to school.

One year later, I am going to school every day and enjoying my studies very much. I am not working all the time anymore and have time to play with my friends.

Many other boys and girls, like me, who never went to school before are now going to school with me and they too, are happy.

Because my life is better now, I want to help other children to go to school so that we can all learn and have bright futures together.

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Message

*Study hard and help other children do the same.
Build a community that is fair to all children*

Name : Kailash Munda
Age : 13 years
SC/ST : Yes
No. of Siblings : 3
Village : Balaniposi
Block : Patana
District : Keonjhar

Changes Noticed : The child and his parents were motivated towards education and issues of discrimination were addressed in the community as a whole.

Intervention
Implemented by : PECUC, in partnership with Save the Children

LOOKING FORWARD

"Hunger, poverty and hard work were all that I experienced all my life. My family is very poor and all of us have to work to get a square meal a day. Sometimes, we are not able to get even that. We live in a small thatched hut that does not always keep out the weather.

Most of the people in our village are poor. My parents work as daily labourers on other people's land. Sometimes they work in a small shop or try and grow vegetables. They have never gone to school and cannot read and write.

There were times when our lives felt very hopeless, but things are slowly changing for us. Today I am looking forward to my future and I am thankful for all the changes in my life.

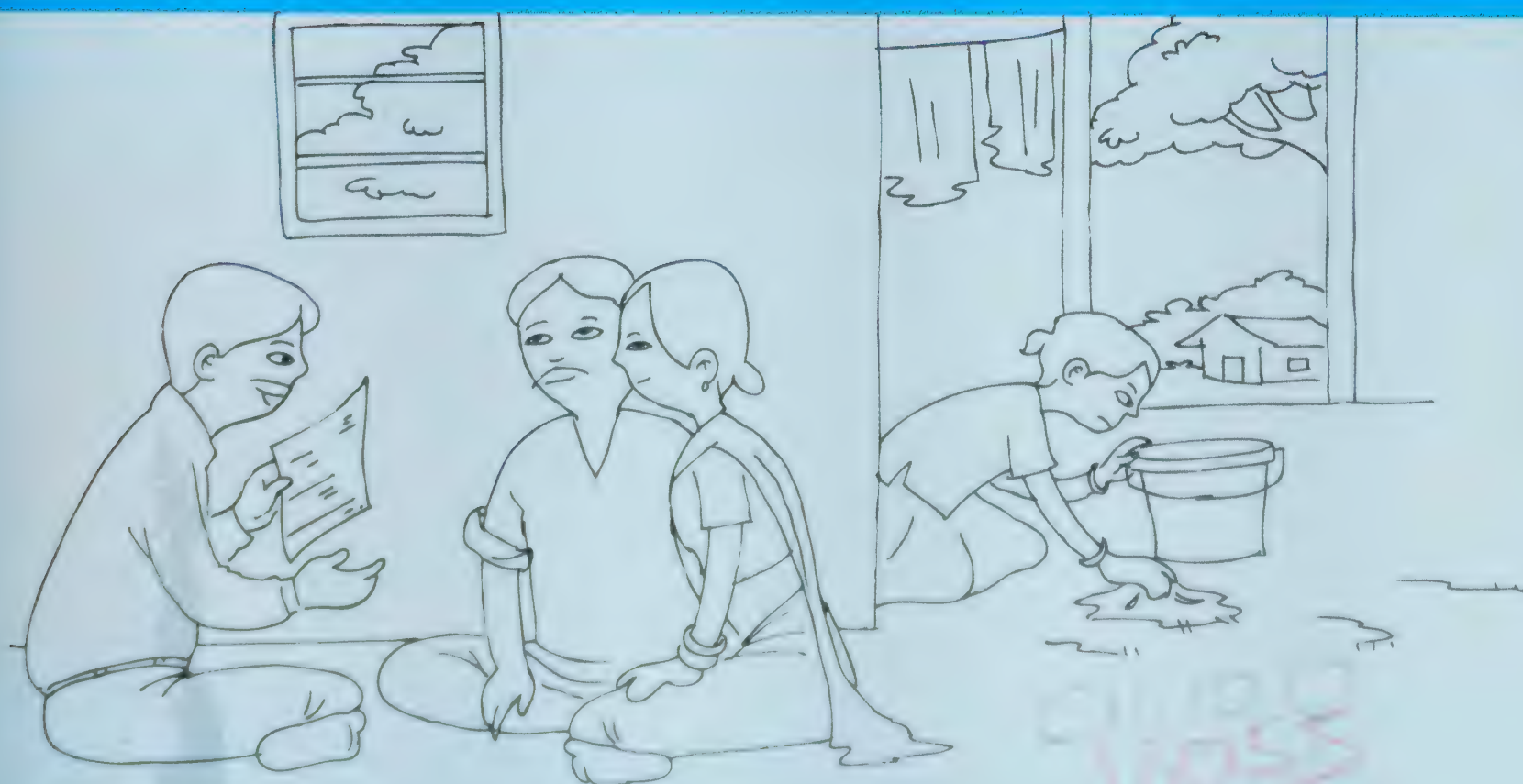
I have come a long way and am grateful to all those who have helped. Most of all, I am happy that my parents are now encouraging me to study. They really believe that I can have a bright future!

Some time ago, the situation was very different. I wanted to go to school like other children in clean uniform and with books. But instead, I went to work in the fields to earn money for my family.

When the people from an organization called PECUC came to our village, we did not pay much attention. Until one day, when I was working in the fields with my parents, some of these people came and started talking to me. They wanted to know why I was working and not in school.

We naturally told them about how we were unable to feed ourselves leave alone thinking of school, which would cost money. My parents told them that working was more important than going to school.

To my joy and surprise, they said that there are ways to go to school, where I need not pay anything. I did not know that was even possible. Then these people explained to my parents how education



can be useful in life. They also explained that education is not only free but that all those who go to school get one free meal a day.

I could not really understand how they came to know about my family and me. The organization started an adult group, called a child protection committee in the village. It involves the participation of anganwadi workers, teachers, village leaders and representatives of self help group members.

In one of their meetings, Bhubaneswar Naik, the School Chairman identified my case and shared the matter with other members. That was how they decided to contact me.

These people were really amazing. They talked about many issues that we had never thought of before. They told us about child rights and how people are equal even if they are poor or from a lower caste.

The people from the organization told my parents and others about government schemes like MNREGS and Annatodaya Yojana. Through these, my parents could find work to earn more money.

All this had a deep effect on my parents. We never knew that the government was doing so much for us. Thanks to these people. We realized that there were many schemes being implemented by the government that would help my parents make money to look after us.

My life and indeed my entire family's life, has become better now! I hope one day I can also become a teacher or a social worker and help others especially children like myself.

DD



Message

Live without exclusion and violence, especially against girls

Name	: Puspanjali Naik
Age	: 13 years
SC/ST	: Yes
No. of Siblings	: 2
Village	: Talapada
Block	: Patana
District	: Keonjhar
Changes Noticed	: The parents have understood the benefits of education and the child is now attending school on a regular basis. They have been given access to different government schemes and have an improved life.
Intervention Implemented by	: PECUC, in partnership with Save the Children

A BRIGHTER FUTURE

“ I have never been happier in my life! My parents are sending me to school everyday these days. Things have become better beyond all my hopes.

I was not a good scholar but liked to study. I was in class IV. Many a times, I had to work at home to help in domestic works, due to which I was not able to go to school regularly. Then I stopped going entirely. After all, we are poor and this is the life we live.

Even when I used to go to school, I always had to sit separately, away from other children. They would make fun of me because of my torn uniform and my bare feet. They would ask me not to touch the glass with my lips while drinking water from the pot at school. I used to feel bad that they did not let me play with them. None of the girls would be friends with me.

Nobody would help me when I missed classes. And many times, my parents would need me to help them in the house and would tell me not to go to school. But in spite of all this, I used to like study and I wanted to do well in school.

Some time ago, people from an NGO called SOVA came to our village and held discussions about children in our village. They came to meet me too. They talked to me and asked me if I liked to study. I told them that I like it very much and I miss going to school. Then they went and talked to my parents and told them how education is important.

These people explained that it is possible for every child to do things if only they get the same chances. If I stay at home and work in the kitchen or in the field, then even when I'm older I



will only be able to work in kitchen or at fields. But if I go to school, I could become a teacher or even a doctor.

The volunteers of SOVA talked to all other children as well as adults in the village. They really changed our thinking about many things. They talked about "social exclusion" in the village, which is something that has been a part of our lives. Our poor economic condition had kept me aloof from my peers.

I thought it was normal that other children did not want to play with me because I am poor. But now I can see that we can all change. We can all live, play and study together and we all have an equal chance for a bright future. It is possible only when our elders do not teach us how to discriminate against and exclude others.

I now have many friends. I go to school everyday and we all love to study and play together. We also go to the child clubs together and talk about many of these ideas with other children.

I hope that some day I can become a teacher. I can help more children like me get a better chance in life.

DD



Message

Let us all live and learn together

Name : Naina Bhoi
Age : 13 years
SC/ST : Yes
No. of Siblings : 5
Village : Jhodiguda
Panchayat : Litiguda
District : Koraput

Changes Noticed : Today Naina is not only attending school regularly, but is participating regularly in the child club and other community meetings. She is increasingly being treated as an equal among her peers and is respected in the community.

Intervention
Implemented by : SOVA, in partnership with Save the Children

NO BARRIERS

“ Communal riots changed my life the way we used to live. Suddenly everything changed and I found myself living in a relief camp. We had to move out of our home and stay in a camp and I really did not like it.

After moving into the camp, I saw that people began to treat me differently. Not just me, but my whole family and community. They used to look at us as though we were unwanted.

I couldn't understand at first; I thought it was in my mind. When my friends stopped playing with me and even my teachers began to treat me differently, I began to understand.

They looked at our whole community as though it was backward and they didn't want anything to do with us. I couldn't really understand why their attitude changed so fast, but my parents explained that these issues have been going on for a while. That's why the riots happened.

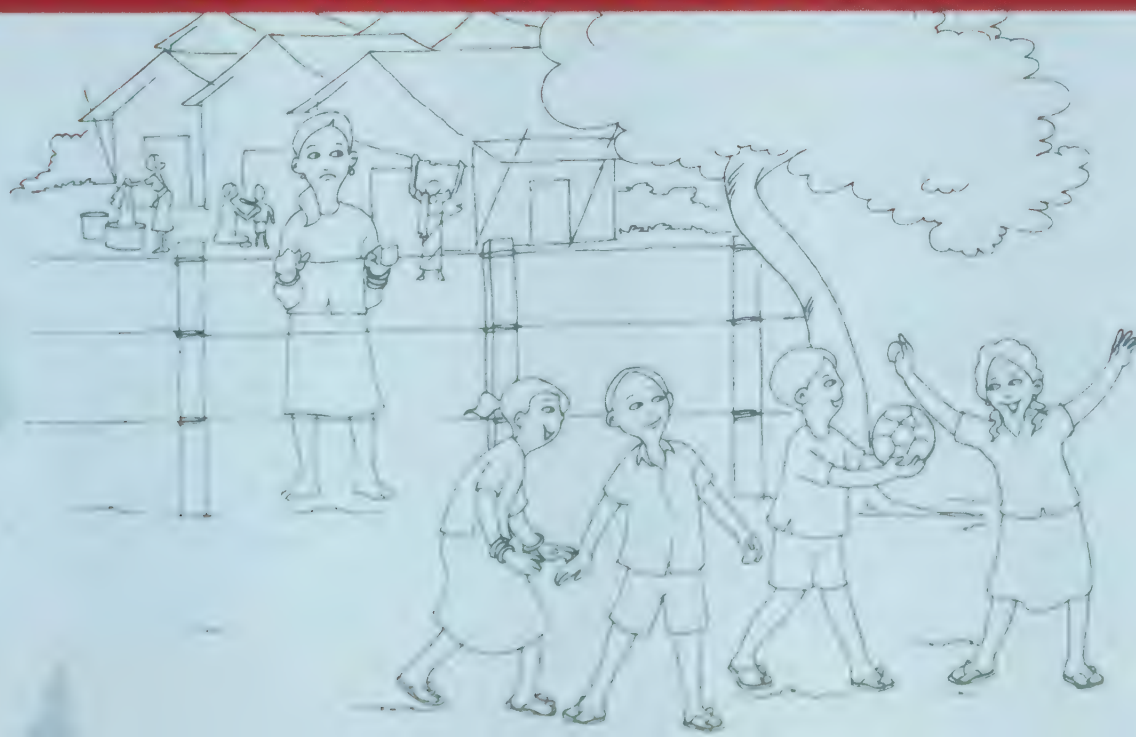
Things became very difficult for me. Because of the riots, I could not attend school for some time. But after that, when I was able to rejoin school, my friends acted like they didn't even know me.

I lost my books and notes during the riots. I no longer had friends in school and even the teachers acted like they didn't want me around. Because of all this, I felt very lonely and I stopped going to school.

They made me feel like there was something wrong with me, even if I wasn't doing anything wrong. It was a very difficult time for me. I stayed at home all the time and would only interact with the people of my community. I felt like a prisoner in the relief camp.

After many days of this, my mother saw how sad I was and she took me to attend a child club meeting. She is a teacher at another school in the village, so she knew about the child club. She told me that they might be able to help me.

One day, in a child club meeting, there were discussions going on around child friendly schools, they asked me about my feelings and problems. There were many people from the community



including adults, teachers and so on. There were also people from an NGO called AAINA. These people believe in equality for all people, especially children and they feel that issues of exclusion and discrimination should be addressed. When they heard my story, they decided to help me out.

They conducted counseling sessions in the village and talked to teachers and other students in school. They explained about non-discrimination and asked them to work to create a friendly learning environment for all children.

After all this happened, I tried once more to attend school and am finding that these sessions have helped.

Now the children and teachers do not avoid me and are more willing to include me in all the activities. They are much more supportive of me despite our differences and I am once more enjoying going to school.

In fact, the community as a whole is accepting us and my family no longer feels constantly discriminated against.

I love learning and going to school. I once again have many friends there and we work, laugh and play together. Now, I plan to study hard and help address such problems one day. I want to help other children live easier lives without facing discrimination and rejection every single day of their lives.

DD



Message
We are all born equal and we should work to make this a reality in every child's life

Name	: Gecchamani Nayak
Age	: 14 years
SC/ST	: Yes
Village	: Kumbharakupa
Block	: G. Udayagiri
District	: Kandhamal
Changes Noticed	: The child is now attending school regularly, where her peers and teachers have been sensitized against communal discrimination. Hence, she is more integrated and well adjusted, as is her entire family, within the larger community.
Intervention Implemented by	: AAINA, in partnership with Save the Children

AGAINST ADVERSITY

My father passed away due to illness, I could not attend school regularly. I was in class V at that time. When I finally got admitted to school, I had to stay back, work and earn money to help my mother.

I did some household work, cleaning people's homes. I also did some farm work. I could not earn much money, only 40 or 50 rupees a day that too not every day – but it used to help my mother.

Still, I tried to go to school whenever I could. In between I got admitted to class VI in high school.

We had no transport facilities, so we used to walk. There is a shortcut that is only three kilometers, so we used to take that path. But that path used to pass through a jungle and hilly tracks. Ours is a small village. There was no friend to walk with me. The road is very dangerous and I cannot go there alone. Besides, I had to work to support my mother and could not attend classes. So I stopped going to school.

I really missed it. I used to love studying and I was doing well in school. I was coming second in the whole class! I felt very sad about not being able to go there anymore. My dream for a better future was lost somewhere along the way. I had started working at other people's houses again. My mother wanted me to get married as well. I was scared.

Then, an organization came to our village. It was called RARE. They set up child clubs in our village and also in nearby villages. At first I was shy to go there. But then my friends convinced me to go to one of the meetings. Now I go all the time and I like to talk about my experiences and discuss other topics too.

But the best part is that they helped me getting readmission back into school. They discussed and convinced my mother as well. They took me and my mother to Asurmunda Ashram School. The teacher insisted on a caste certificate as I belong to the Scheduled Caste community. It took a lot



of time and effort for my mother to arrange one with the help of villagers and RARE. In between the admission time had passed. When we went to Asurmunda Ashram School, which is 15 km away from my village, the teacher denied me admission again as I was late for the session.

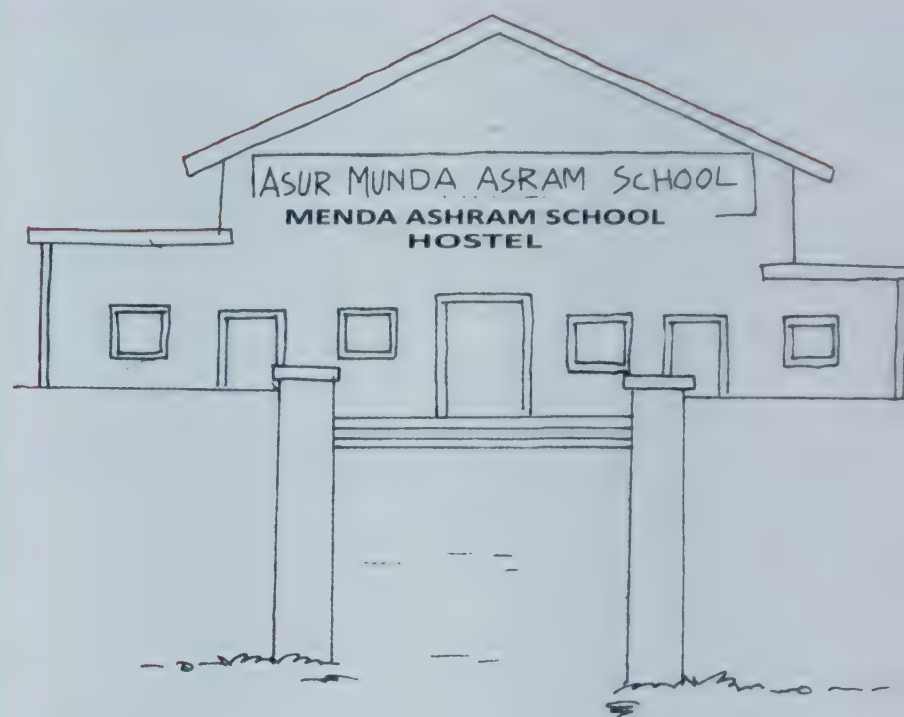
I was unhappy once again. In the meanwhile, my younger sister had also finished her class V. Then RARE and the villagers stepped in. They discussed the matter with the teacher of another Ashram School at Menda. He allowed us to be admitted in the middle of the session.

I joined Menda Ashram School along with my younger sister. It is a school for children from scheduled castes and tribes.

I really never thought this day would come. I am so thankful to all the people who helped me.

Since the school is 15 kilometers away from my village, both my sister and me stay together in the school hostel and study in the same class. The people from RARE helped us arrange all this. Now I am back in school, I can barely contain my excitement!

I plan to study hard and become a teacher. I can then help other children change their lives and realize their dreams.



Message

A helping hand makes it easier for those less privileged to realise their dreams

Name	: Rita Marpachi
Age	: 14 years
SC/ST	: Yes
No. of Siblings	: 5
Village	: Bajikhol
Panchayat	: Rengali
Block	: Sonapur
District	: Subaranapur
Changes Noticed	: The child started attending school in a nearby village. Living arrangements have been made for her with the help of government programmes that support people from excluded sections of society.
Intervention Implemented by	: RARE, in partnership with Save the Children

A RAY OF HOPE

“In many ways I am an unlucky boy. But in the last few months, I have been feeling very lucky. I feel that there are many good people in the world. They have been so kind to my family and me. Now my life is so much better than before!

I was born without being able to see. Yes! I am blind. Because of this, I could not do anything. My whole family went to work. They break stones for building or take care of the cows and buffalos. Sometimes my mother would take me with her. But mostly, they would leave me at home, alone. I would feel scared and sad to always be alone. I wanted to be like my brother and sister. I wanted to play and study. But I could not do anything.

I didn't know that a child club has been set up in our village. With the help of people from an NGO called RARE, the children in the child club had mapped out the status of all the children in our village. That is where they identified me. They came to know that I am blind and that I don't go to school. The NGO invited my parents to a Disability Day meeting, where they told about government schemes that could provide help to people like me.

Members of RARE helped us go to see the doctor in Sonapur. The teacher from the local school also came along to help us. The Doctor gave me a certificate explaining my problem, a "certificate of disability," and only then I will be able to access schemes for the physically challenged.

The staff from RARE explained that after receiving the certificate, I will get many benefits, like disability pension, a scholarship to study and other things like a bus pass, a train pass, aid and appliances.

My life began to change. I was made a part of the child club in my village. With friends in the child club, I learned and sang a song for the first time in my life. I joined school as well.



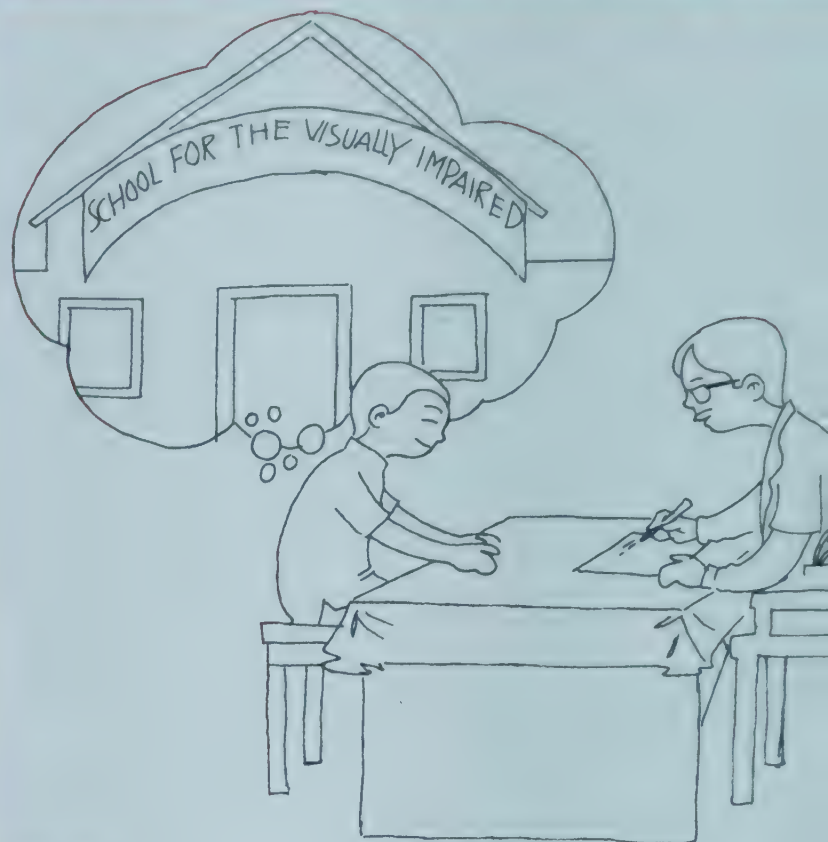
The teacher, Mr. Das, was very nice. I started going to his classes every day. Sometimes it was very difficult because there were so many people. There was only one class instead of five. It used to be very noisy in the class. But I still liked going there because I learnt many interesting things. I also liked meeting other children. For the first time in my life, I started feeling like a normal child.

But still, it was difficult for me in school. Mr. Das and the people in the child club told me about a special school. There, children like me can also learn. They helped me get admitted into one such school in Sonapur where children like me study and get special support.

This is a free facility, so my family is not burdened in any way. I have to live in the school hostel, though I miss my family, but I love my new school. They help me a lot here and I am learning a lot. Now I feel like I can study and become something more in my life. Just because I cannot see does not mean I cannot learn.

All this has completely changed my life. I feel like a new person.

DD



Message

A child, who cannot see, deserves a chance to learn and go on to have a bright future just like other children

Name	: Sunil Kumar Gadua
Age	: 7 years
Disability	: Visually impaired since birth
SC/ST	: No
No. of Siblings	: 2
Village	: Majhimunda
Panchayat	: Rengali
Block	: Sonapur
District	: Subaranapur

Changes Noticed : The parents and the child have been informed about government programmes and entitlements for persons with disabilities. They are now availing these schemes and the child is attending a residential school for children with disabilities.

Intervention

Implemented by : RARE, in partnership with Save the Children

RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an agreement between all governments in the world about the rights of all the children everywhere. It was ratified by India in 1992. It is a universally agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations. It spells out the basic human rights of children. Every right in the convention is inherent to the human dignity and harmonious development of every child. The convention protects children's rights by setting standards for both parents and the state in health care, education and legal, civil and social services. Here are some selected rights that are very important for children.

Article 1: Everyone under 18 years of age has all the rights in this convention.

Article 2: The convention applies to everyone whatever your race, religion, abilities, whatever you think or say, whatever type of family you come from.

Article 3: All organizations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child.

Article 4: Governments should make these rights available to all children.

Article 6: You have the right to life. Governments should ensure that you survive and thrive.

Article 7: You have the right to have a legally registered name and nationality. You also have the right to know and, as far possible, to be cared for, by your parents.

Article 9: You should not be separated from your parents unless it is for your own good. If your parents have separated, you have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this might hurt you.

Article 11: The Government should take steps to stop you from being taken out of your own country illegally.

Article 12: You have the right to say what you think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect you and to have your opinions taken into account.

Article 13: You have the right to get and to share information, to meet together and to join groups and organizations as long as it is not damaging to you or to others.

Article 14: You have the right to think and believe what you want and to practice your religion, as long as you are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights, Parents should guide you on these matters.

Article 15: You have the right to meet together and to join groups and organizations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.

Article 16: You have a right to privacy. The law should protect you from attacks against your way of life, your good name, your families and your homes.

Article 17: You have the right to reliable information from the mass media. TV, radio and newspapers should provide information that you can understand and should not promote materials that could

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